



SHARP FACTS

HIV Infection and AIDS

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What is HIV? What is AIDS?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). AIDS has killed over 25 million people, making it one of the most deadly epidemics of all time.

Where did HIV come from?

It appears that HIV may have jumped from primates to people in Africa sometime during the last century. AIDS was first reported in the United States in 1981.

How many people have HIV & AIDS?

Department of the Navy: Over 5000 active duty Sailors and Marines have tested positive for HIV since 1985. HIV infected members are retained so long as they remain healthy, and about 500 remain on active duty today.

United States: More than 900,000 cases of AIDS have been reported in the United States since 1981. As many as one million Americans may be living with HIV today, one-quarter of whom are unaware of their infection. Both men and women get and can spread HIV. In recent years, 1 in 4 newly infected Americans has been a woman. The epidemic is growing most rapidly among minority populations. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), AIDS affects nearly seven times more African Americans and three times more Hispanics than whites. In recent years, an increasing number of African-American women and children are being affected by HIV/AIDS.

Worldwide, an estimated 40 million people were living with HIV at the end of 2005. During 2005, an estimated 5.5 million people became infected, and over 2 million died of AIDS.

How is HIV passed from one person to another?

HIV transmission can occur when blood, semen (including pre-seminal fluid), vaginal fluid, or breast milk from an infected person enters the body of an uninfected person. HIV can enter the body through a vein (e.g., injection drug use), the anus or rectum, the vagina, the penis, the mouth, other mucous membranes (e.g., eyes or inside of the nose), or cuts and sores.

In the U.S., the most common ways that HIV is transmitted from one person to another are:

- by having sexual intercourse (anal, vaginal, or oral sex) with an HIV-infected person
- by sharing needles or injection equipment with an HIV-infected person
- from HIV-infected women to babies before or during birth, or through breast-feeding after birth

Intact, healthy skin is an excellent barrier against HIV and other viruses and bacteria.

HIV is NOT transmitted through the air or by eating food. It does not live long outside the body.

HIV is NOT transmitted by casual contact, like shaking hands, hugging, or by sharing telephones, etc.

You can NOT get HIV by donating blood.

Scientists have found no evidence that HIV is spread through **saliva, sweat, tears, urine, or feces.**

Is there a cure or vaccine for HIV Infection?

There is no cure to rid the body of HIV infection. There is no vaccine which can protect a person from becoming infected with HIV. Today there are medical treatments that can slow down the rate at which HIV weakens the immune system. There are other treatments that can prevent or cure some of the illnesses associated with AIDS, though these treatments do not eliminate the HIV infection itself. These

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treatments, many of which have severe side effects, are enabling people with HIV to live much longer, healthier lives than was possible before 1996.

How can I tell if I'm infected with HIV?

The only way to determine for sure whether you are infected is to be tested for HIV infection. You cannot rely on symptoms to know whether or not you are infected with HIV. Many people who are infected with HIV do not have any symptoms at all for many years. Similarly, you cannot tell that a person has HIV simply by looking at them.

How can I avoid infection with HIV?

- Abstain from sex or delay sex

Refraining from having sexual intercourse with an infected partner is the best way to prevent transmission of HIV and other STDs. People can choose to not have sex. People can also decide to wait, or delay sex, until a later time in their life. They may choose to have personal relationships that do not involve sex.

But, if you choose to have sex, there are things you can do to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV:

-Monogamy

Monogamy is sex between two people, who only have sex with each other, as part of a long-term relationship. If neither partner is infected, there is no risk of disease transmission. Getting to know your partner and his/her sexual history before you decide to have sex can also reduce your chance of exposure to disease. A series of short-term relationships is not as safe because of the increased risk that one of those partners will be infected.

-Use Condoms

Although not as safe as abstinence or monogamy, the correct and consistent use of latex condoms during sexual intercourse - vaginal, anal, or oral - can greatly reduce a person's risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV infection. Put the condom on before any vaginal, anal, or oral contact.

-Do not share needles or "works"

The safest thing a person can do is to not inject non-prescription drugs. For people who do continue to inject drugs, use a new, sterile needle from a reliable source each time. If sterile needles cannot be used, disinfect needles and syringes before and after each use.

-Stay sober

Use of drugs or alcohol can affect sexual behavior because of reduced inhibitions and clouded judgment. Stay in control - stay sober.

Where can I get more information?

Your medical care provider should be consulted if you think you may have been exposed to any sexually transmitted disease. CDC provides information through their National AIDS Hotline at (800) 342-AIDS (2437). For further information regarding your sexual health, visit the Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP) Home Page at <http://www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp/sharp>.

This information was adapted by the Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP), Navy Environmental Health Center from materials developed by the National Institutes of Health [HIV Infection and AIDS - An Overview](http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/hivinf.htm) <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/hivinf.htm> ; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (including [HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv) Vol 15; Mar 2004), and from materials developed by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), [Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic](http://www.unaids.org/en/HIV_data/2006GlobalReport/default.asp) http://www.unaids.org/en/HIV_data/2006GlobalReport/default.asp .